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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Fifty-seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1425th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 17 August 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. SHERIFIS

later: Mr. VALENCIA RODRIGUEZ
(Vice-Chairman)

later: Mr. SHERIFIS
(Chairman)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS, COMMENTS AND INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 4) (continued)

Thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth periodic reports of the Holy See (CERD/C/338/Add.11)

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Monsignor Bertello, Monsignor Boccardi, Mr. Buonomo, Monsignor Peña Parra and Father De Gregori (Holy See) took places at the Committee table.

2. Monsignor BERTELLO (Holy See), introducing the periodic report (CERD/C/338/Add.11), said that the Holy See valued highly the service rendered by the Committee in encouraging action by States to combat racial discrimination. The report had been drafted taking into consideration the Committee's earlier concluding observations and comments. The Committee had at that time noted in particular a lack of information on practical measures taken to implement the Convention, especially relating to education. The Holy See had also followed the Committee's reporting guidelines and, in the interests of establishing a useful dialogue, had more recently circulated a preliminary version of its periodic report to certain members of the Committee so as to be able to introduce new elements into the final version.

3. Drawing attention to the structure of the report, he said that a number of services had taken part in its drafting, including the pontifical councils for the interpretation of legislative texts, interreligious dialogue, pastoral care of migrants and itinerant people, and justice and peace; the Congregation for Catholic Education; and the editorial offices of Radio Vatican and the daily L'Osservatore Romano.

4. In international law, the Holy See was a sovereign subject with an independent legal personality. However, because of its specific nature, its presence within the community of nations and the international organizations was mainly felt because of its religious and moral mission. As a sovereign State subject to international law, it fulfilled its obligations under various international instruments and, under canon law, the international conventions to which it subscribed took precedence over ordinary law. The presence of the Holy See in international organizations and its accession to the Convention were motivated by the same religious and moral considerations. The structure of its periodic report therefore differed from that of other States parties.

5. The Catholic Church and the legislation of the Holy See by their very nature categorically rejected all forms of discrimination, a fact reflected in all the Church's basic documents, and in particular those issued after the Second Vatican Council. The same principle featured prominently in the 1983 Code of Canon Law and the Code of Canon Law for the Eastern Churches, which governed the lives of the numerically small Catholic communities that had their own specific traditions. The latter was a concrete example of positive discrimination as set out in article 2.2 of the Convention, and was aimed at ensuring equal rights for groups in specific situations. Canon 208 stated that "There exists among all the Christian faithful [...]

a true equality with regard to dignity and activity". The faithful, as legal subjects, had equal rights, duties and legal capacities. Any differentiation was not based on the legal status of the person, but rather on the legal condition unique to each individual. Under canon law, the fundamental rights of the faithful were considered inherent rights, which existed independently of any provisions of positive law.

6. In response to the Committee's request, the report included over 20 pages of statistics on the world's Catholic population, reflecting also the Church's presence and activities around the world. The statistics indicated the geographic extension of the numerous local churches in various countries and territories, nearly all of which, out of deference for their specificity and their local cultures, were currently headed by indigenous leaders. The Church's function had always been twofold, being both spiritual and also concerned with human advancement. Its activities to spread the Word were therefore always carried out in parallel with education, health services, charitable works, training and the promotion of human development in the broad sense of the term.

7. The Catholic Church and the Holy Father had unceasingly striven to raise awareness of the need to pursue the struggle against prejudice, racist behaviour and racial discrimination. The periodic report cited a number of statements to that effect delivered by the Holy Father to those in Government, politicians or bishops, or pronounced on the anniversaries of tragic incidents. In the light of the surge of interest on the part of the Committee and other United Nations bodies in the plight of the Roma, the Holy See would include in future periodic reports specific information on the activities of the Catholic Church for Roma communities in various parts of the world.

8. The periodic report provided information on educational action, to the extent rendered possible by the confidentiality of data concerning the ethnic composition of students enrolled in Catholic schools. There were about 170,000 such schools in the world, with a total enrolment of 42 million, including some 8 million in Europe. Following the suggestions of some of the Committee members, and in accordance with General Recommendation XXIII, the Holy See had begun compiling data to determine the percentage of students at Catholic schools from indigenous groups. In certain regions such as Australia, Canada and the Holy Land some progress had been made in compiling data on the multi-ethnic composition of school populations.

9. The Church had established educational centres with the aim of promoting tolerance, for example in Parma, Italy, and Hildesheim, Germany. Three schools which had been set up by the archdiocese of Sarajevo were attended by 1,600 children from the three ethnic communities in the city, and promoted mutual respect, tolerance and peace; there were plans to open more in 11 other cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A girls' school in Jerusalem was at the vanguard of education for tolerance, and was attended by some 500 Muslim and Christian schoolchildren. Catholic schools in the Holy Land were examples of tolerance, and were wholly in keeping with the spirit and objectives of the Convention. In many countries where Christians were not in the majority, Catholic schools were a unique place where children and youth of different cultures, faiths, ethnic groups and social groups could meet. The Catholic International Education Office was developing literacy projects in Haiti, Bolivia, Senegal and Cameroon in an attempt to safeguard local cultures and overcome discrimination against rural and disadvantaged groups.

The 15th World Youth Day currently being held in Rome with the participation of a million young people from over 160 countries was another Church activity which would promote respect and integration among young people from different cultures, ethnic groups and communities.

10. The Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue regularly issued messages to mark the end of religious festivals such as Ramadan, Diwali and Vesakh, with the aim of showing respect for other faiths and encouraging mutual acceptance. In June 1995 an Islamic-Catholic Liaison Committee had been established to foster dialogue on subjects of common interest. That Committee had organized various meetings, including one in Cairo in July 1998, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

11. The periodic report contained information on the activities carried out by the Holy See to promote peace in the Balkans and in the Great Lakes region of Africa. The Church's commitment to peace was reflected not only in such efforts and initiatives whereby the hierarchy condemned racism and racial discrimination on moral grounds, but also in the action of the numerous Christians who were true builders of peace.

12. Mr. VALENCIA RODRIGUEZ (Country Rapporteur) explained that he was replacing Mr. Yutzis, who was ill, as Country Rapporteur. The periodic report was quite exhaustive and addressed the Committee's previous comments and concluding observations. The Holy See was a unique State party because of its special status. Governed by the Code of Canon Law, it had as a basic mission to do everything in its power to strengthen peace in the world through spiritual, and not temporal, efforts. Because of its specific situation with little or no regular population apart from senior Church officials, the State party had provided no statistical information on its population and demographic breakdown. On the other hand, the report offered much information on the Catholic population of the world, over which the Church wielded moral influence. According to the report, some 989 million people on all continents were Catholic. The Church was therefore a powerful spiritual force which must be properly used in order to achieve the objectives of the Convention.

13. Regarding the legal framework to combat racial discrimination (paras. 6 et seq.), the Church stressed its right to defend fundamental human values and rights and recognized the authority of its international commitments, including those under the Convention, which took precedence over ordinary law. The Church should continue to encourage States to recognize that principle. It was also important to note that the Catholic Church had instituted profound changes so as better to meet the needs of the modern world.

14. With regard to article 2, the report noted that Canon 208 proclaimed the full equality of all the faithful in terms of both "dignity" and "action". The Holy See should not only promote that equality but also ensure that it was implemented on a practical level.

15. With regard to article 3, the report cited statements by the Pope on racism and xenophobia of particular note was a statement he had made on 3 February 1992 on immigration, a topic which was of increasing concern. The Holy See should provide more information on measures it had taken to defend the rights of those who had been forced to leave their countries. In a statement on 10 February 1993, the Pope had stressed that minorities within a country had

the right to their own language, cultural and traditions, an issue of special interest to the Committee. He requested more information on steps the Holy See had taken to protect those rights, especially given the many regions of the world where such rights were ignored.

16. No information had been provided on implementation of articles 4 and 6 of the Convention. Although article 4 was not relevant to the State of Vatican City, given its special status and transient population, he wondered what steps the Holy See had taken to promote implementation of that article in countries where it had great religious and moral influence, especially since the Holy See had recognized the scope of that article and the Committee attached great importance to it in the fight against racial discrimination. Similarly, he wondered whether the delegation could provide more information on steps which the Holy See had taken to promote implementation of the provisions of article 6.

17. Much information had been provided with regard to article 7, and he noted the Church's exemplary efforts in the area of education, which was especially important given the current resurgence in racial hatred, racism and xenophobia. Growing numbers of students attended Catholic schools at all levels, with current enrolment at more than 42 million worldwide (para. 49). They were taught moral principles and the need to put an end to racial discrimination, especially the most recent and alarming forms of racism. It was noteworthy that those Catholic schools were open to students from all races, ethnic groups and religions. In that context, he stressed the important influence of the Catholic schools in the Holy Land, a region fraught with racial, ethnic and political tensions (paras. 62-81) which provided students from different backgrounds with the opportunity to learn and to reaffirm basic human values together.

18. Vatican Radio (paras. 88-89) had often broadcast programmes dealing with the issue of the elimination of racial discrimination and had always broadcast special programmes commemorating the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. That work should continue and should be recorded in the next report.

19. Part Two, Section III, of the report dealt with ethnic conflicts and provided important information on measures taken in relation to the conflicts in the Balkans and in Rwanda, where the Holy See had done everything possible to resolve conflicts born of ethnic or racial hatred and characterized by ethnic cleansing. Although the warnings and appeals for understanding made by the Holy See and many States and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had not been heard, the Holy See should continue its efforts in that area and indeed redouble its efforts where necessary.

20. He noted the information contained in the report on the possible involvement of ecclesiastics in the genocide in Rwanda (para. 106) according to which the Church as such could not be held responsible for the transgressions of those who had in fact acted against the precepts of evangelical law and who would, if found guilty, be called to account for their acts.

21. In closing, he welcomed the reference by the delegation in its oral presentation to the efforts of the Church to meet the needs of the Roma, which was an issue of special concern to the Committee, and said he looked forward to continued dialogue between the Holy See and the Committee.

22. Mr. Valencia Rodriguez, Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

23. Mr. ABOUL-NASR expressed satisfaction at the very positive change in attitude shown by the Catholic Church in recent years. The Church was showing a new openness and tolerance, as evidenced by the Pope's many statements and messages. He noted in particular the Pope's statements on the excesses of the crusades, which had been most welcome in his part of the world. Referring to the Church's role in education, he said that there had been positive developments in that sphere as well. Speaking from his own family's experience, he said that children attending Catholic schools in his country now received excellent training in their own religion and language, which had not been the case in the past.

24. The Church was also promoting dialogue amongst different religious groups through, for example, the Islamo-Catholic Liaison Committee and the World Youth Days and, in the Middle East, was encouraging dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox churches. The Church's efforts for reconciliation and understanding should be recognized and praised. Those efforts, and the statements by the Pope, were highly appreciated, in particular in his region of the world.

25. Mr. de GOUTTES expressed satisfaction at the wealth of statistical information in the report on the situation of the Catholic Church around the world as well as the useful explanation of the specific status of the Holy See under international law. The Church played an important role in helping to solve the problems faced by migrant populations and the Pope had made numerous statements denouncing racism and xenophobia and promoting dialogue between religions. The Church was often involved in efforts to settle ethnic conflicts, for example in the Balkans and in Rwanda, and was working to protect the rights of the Roma (paras. 26 and 87). In the context of the promotion of mutual understanding, he cited the example of the World Youth Days, which provided an exceptional opportunity for interaction among different ethnic groups and races, which was of special interest to the Committee.

26. While recognizing the special situation of the Holy See, he wondered why it had not made the declaration under article 14 of the Convention, since it was conceivable that some person working temporarily at the Vatican might wish to submit an individual communication. With regard to paragraph 34 of the report dealing with Canon 221 (c) on the principle of legality in penal matters, he wondered whether it was appropriate to speak of penal sanctions in the context of Canon Law and requested the delegation to provide some clarification on that point. With regard to the possible involvement of ecclesiastics in the genocide in Rwanda (para. 106), although he agreed that the Church itself could not be held responsible for the acts of individuals, he wondered if the delegation could provide some information on the Church's attitude in cases where the clergy had been accused of contributing to the genocide. Like Mr. Aboul Nasr, he stressed the importance of the Pope's statements requesting forgiveness for errors which might have been committed by the Church in the past.

27. While the Catholic Church, like other religions, had sectarian or fundamentalist factions, he applauded the Church's move towards openness and tolerance and urged it to continue to use its tremendous influence to promote religious and ethnic understanding.

28. Mr. FALL noted in particular the role of the Church in education and said that, although his own country was 85 per cent Muslim, the Catholic schools had a reputation for quality and tolerance and in fact 80 to 85 per cent of their students were Muslim and were under no obligation to convert to Catholicism. The Church had also played a very positive role in reducing conflicts between cultures and ethnic groups, for example in Rwanda and other countries, and in promoting dialogue between countries, religions and cultures. Those efforts at dialogue and conflict prevention, such as the national conferences held in most African countries, often sponsored by the Church, must continue. The Church was also very active in Africa, in meeting the needs of the many refugees fleeing conflicts. His own country had some 1 million refugees from conflicts in neighbouring countries; there were scarce resources to meet their needs and he hoped the Church would continue to do whatever it could to help such displaced persons and continue in general to play its positive and very necessary role.

29. Mr. NOBEL stressed the unique position of the Roman Catholic Church as a moral force throughout the world and hoped that the Holy See could play an ever greater role in peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts in situations of conflict. He suggested that the Church might promote dialogue among the parties in conflict, provide early warning of possible conflicts, create opportunities for the parties to meet face to face, identify suitable representatives from the parties in conflict and cooperate with other bodies such as NGOs and intergovernmental organizations with a view to preventing or resolving conflicts. He wondered whether the delegation might have some comment on that possibility.

30. Mr. BOSSUYT observed that the details given on the legal personality of the Holy See in part I of the report showed clearly that it was a State party different from all others. With reference to paragraph 4 (h) of the report, the ratification by the Holy See of any international treaty automatically constituted an encouragement to others.

31. Very interesting statistics had been provided: the data about Catholic education, for example, gave an idea of the magnitude of the Catholic educational system throughout the world. His own country, Belgium, ranked high on the list as to secondary and higher education. He commended the Church's position that its schools must be open to all, regardless of religious affiliation (report, para. 72) and, indeed in many non-Christian countries, the Catholic schools were often the only place where young people of different faiths, cultures, social classes or ethnic backgrounds came into contact with each other (para. 59).

32. The section of the report on Rwanda was particularly interesting, and he agreed that the Church as such could not be held responsible for any transgressions that might have been committed by individual clergymen (para. 106). The Catholic Church in Rwanda had been in a special position and some of the clergy had perhaps been too close to the regime in power before the tragic events; yet at the same time, the messages to the Christian community from the Rwandan episcopate as a whole (para. 104) had always preached reconciliation.

33. Ms. McDOUGALL, commending the Holy See especially for its role in providing education in developing countries throughout the world, asked for further information about the governance structure of the Vatican itself and about its policies to ensure that even in the top echelons there was a recognition of its obligations under the Convention to promote diversity in the hierarchy. The report itself had not dealt at all with that aspect.

34. Mr. RECHETOV noted that the valuable dialogue with the Holy See, which, as a subject of international law, ratified treaties, provided the Committee with its only opportunity for direct contact with representatives of one of the great world religions. It was important to hear voices of universal scope speak out on the issue of race relations, which were a significant cause of conflicts. The Church had always played a special part in national conflicts. In history, of course, there had been certain errors, which the Church had recognized; but its activities now to stem many ethnic and religious conflicts very positive. That could be said, of course, of religious leaders of other faiths as well, as evidenced by the actions of the Muslim leadership in his own country. Maintaining peace among the various religions themselves was important, because their faithful looked to them as models. He therefore hoped that the Catholic Church would continue its peacemaking role.

35. Mr. SHAHI paid tribute to services the Church rendered in the cause of education in all parts of the world. He himself, like many others in Pakistan, had been the beneficiary of a virtually free education of a very high quality in Catholic educational institutions.

36. The Holy See had earned the admiration of the whole world for the position it had taken in recent ethnic conflicts, categorically denouncing atrocities, assuaging the wounds of the victims, constantly working for peace. It had fostered tolerance by promoting interreligious and inter-ethnic dialogues as a way of negating clashes of civilizations. The doctrines and the thinking set out in paragraphs 79, 94 and 96 of the report, for example, were most impressive, and encapsulated the spirit of the Committee's own approach to the Convention.

37. Monsignor BERTELLO (Holy See) expressed appreciation for the emphasis that had been put on vital aspects of the Church's doctrine and activity. Education, the refugee problem, interreligious dialogue: all were problems with which the Holy See and the national Catholic churches were wholeheartedly engaged on a basic level. The Holy See would, of course, give thought to further forms of peacemaking, as part of its respect for the Convention.

38. There was not yet much official documentation issued on the Church's role in Rwanda and in the ethnic conflict there, yet it had worked constantly before, during and after the crisis to make all involved aware of the existing discrimination, as evidenced by the various episcopal letters cited in the report, which had been a synthesis of what all the diocesan priests thought and were trying to accomplish. There had been a great deal of pastoral action at the grass-roots level, especially in trying to inculcate co-existence rather than antagonism among young people, and some of the results had been very satisfactory. In the midst of the crisis, there had been many heroic acts by local priests, one of them being the pastoral letter issued at the risk of his life by the Bishop of Gisenyi after the 1993 massacre there. The Pope, of course, had spoken out at all the important moments at the beginning of the peace negotiations, during them and at the time of the signing of the Arusha Declaration, and had been instrumental in bringing all the parties together at two meetings under the sponsorship of the Churches Contact Committee, which had done much, especially at the beginning, to narrow the gap between extremists. Throughout Africa, indeed, the Church had been active in preaching the message of peace that sprang from the gospels.

39. Regarding the Church's attitude to any individual clergyman who might be found guilty of criminal actions in the Rwandan conflict, that was a matter where the Church would, as always, respect the work of the civil courts, both national and international.

40. Monsignor BOCCARDI (Holy See) noting Mr. Aboul-Nasr's reference to the great changes that had taken place in the Catholic Church in recent years, said that in Catholic schools where the majority of pupils were Muslims lessons were given on the Koran. Such tuition demonstrated a respect for all religions and a commitment towards religious education as part of pupils' overall training.

41. With regard to the crusades, details of the ceremony requesting forgiveness conducted by the Pope would be contained in the next periodic report. The ceremony had been an act of great courage and demonstrated a new reading of historical events by the Holy See, as well as a commitment to the future.

42. With reference to Mr. de Gouttes' question concerning the Committee's competence to receive communications from individuals or groups of people under the jurisdiction of the Holy See, the problem could be considered in two ways. As well as being under the Holy See's jurisdiction, such persons or groups were under State jurisdiction. The official dealing with the admissibility of individual communications was the State Secretary who had signed the Convention on behalf of the Holy See.

43. On the subject of refugees, there were daily arrivals at Italian ports from Turkey and Albania. The refugees in question were welcomed by Catholic Church organizations such as Caritas. Likewise, the Catholic Church was always at the forefront in welcoming refugees in affected countries. In relation to the Holy See's peacekeeping and peacemaking role, during the previous few months the United States Secretary of State had visited the Vatican, as had a Palestinian Minister who had recently participated in the Camp David talks and, most recently, the Foreign Minister of Israel. Reference had been made to the Holy See's policy in that regard. Such a term should be interpreted in a broad sense, insofar as the Holy See made proposals which were promoted through dialogue. Although the discreet contacts established did not always appear in the media, they were constant and were designed to achieve peace in areas of conflict.

44. Responding to Ms. McDougall's question about policy, he said that the means used to implement the Convention were specific to the Holy See, and included efforts to raise awareness of a multiracial coexistence. Multicultural and multi-ethnic education was provided by high-level bodies particular to the Vatican, such as the pontifical councils for justice and peace, for interreligious dialogue and for migrants. At the local level, episcopal conferences were held and working groups were set up.

45. Mr. BUONOMO (Holy See) said, with specific reference to canon law, that penal law in the Catholic Church followed the principles of legal personality rather than of territoriality. Penal law referred only to violations of canon law and related religious issues. The penalties handed down were spiritual, given that subjects under the Church's jurisdiction came from different countries. Part of the Code of Canon Law referred to penal law and its application, and more details could be provided if so required.

46. Mr. Sherifis resumed the Chair.

47. Mr. DIACONU said that in recent decades the actions of the Holy See, and in particular the Pope, had been very important in realizing the aims of the Convention in the attempt to eliminate racial discrimination throughout the world. Those actions had taken the form of colloquiums and missions conducted in various countries to achieve reconciliation between Catholics of different ethnic origin, and Catholics and people of other faiths. A significant example of such missions had been the visit made by the Pope in 1999 to Romania. With regard to canon law, it had been made clear that international conventions prevailed over such law. However, what was the relationship between canonical and domestic laws in individual countries? Likewise, what penalties were applied by ecclesiastical courts and what was the relationship between those courts and lay courts? Given the references made to penal law, it was important to establish what criminal sanctions were applied by the Catholic Church. Although that issue had been discussed, greater clarity was still required. With reference to "canonical borders", although it was clear that no specific demands had been made for such a dividing line, in certain countries where relations existed between the Catholic and other churches it had been made clear that an appropriate division should be respected. In other words, the Catholic Church did not wish other churches to proselytize Catholic believers. Given that such a move appeared to violate the principle of freedom of religion, what was the delegation's opinion on the matter?

48. It was further necessary to establish the exact relationship between religious and ethnic groups. The two concepts were often confused in certain countries, for example in relation to the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, where the Church had been wrongfully implicated in the crimes of national leaders. How did the Catholic Church apply itself in such situations to maintaining and promoting understanding between different ethnic groups and religions?

49. Ms. McDOUGALL said that the Committee normally requested demographic data from States parties disaggregated by race and ethnicity. A general recommendation had also recently been adopted calling for the category of gender to be incorporated in the disaggregated data. The Holy See had provided a large amount of information in its report, all of which referred to the Catholic community outside the Vatican. Further data should therefore be provided on the governance structure within the Vatican, for the different levels of decision-making and by gender, race and ethnicity.

50. The CHAIRMAN said that the particular nature of the Holy See should be taken into account in the consideration of its report.

51. Mr. BUONOMO (Holy See) said that, in terms of the relationship between canon law and the law of individual States, both were sovereign legal orders and constituted two separate systems. Canon law did not affect the laws of individual States although in certain cases the canonization of civil laws was possible. In that connection, State contractual law was applied to the management of ecclesiastical property. Similarly, decisions taken by ecclesiastical courts had no effect in individual States unless a specific agreement existed to the contrary between a State and the Church.

52. Monsignor BERTELLO (Holy See) said with reference to the relationship between Catholic majority communities and other Christian minorities, an ongoing dialogue was being conducted between the two parties. Echoing Mr. Diaconu's comments, he said that the Pope had made a successful visit to Romania. Similarly, discussions were under way in Ukraine regarding the handing over of church buildings which had previously been expropriated. In general terms, minorities were always welcome to settle in majority Catholic areas. That had been proven in both Eastern and Western Europe.

53. Responding to Ms. McDougall, he said that her observations would be taken into account in the Holy See's next report, in which data on the relevant categories of gender and ethnicity would be provided with regard to the Vatican's governing structure.

54. Mr. VALENCIA RODRIGUEZ (Country Rapporteur) said that the exchange of views between the Committee and the delegation had been fruitful in all respects. Committee members had stressed the educational work done by the Holy See in Catholic schools throughout the world, where pupils of all religious persuasions and ethnic origins received tuition. A similar contribution to the elimination of racial discrimination had been made by the multicultural and inter-ethnic meetings promoted by the Catholic Church. Likewise, emphasis had been placed on the Holy See's attempts to alleviate the problems of ethnic minorities, for example in the Balkans and more specifically in Rwanda. Additional information had been provided in that regard. In general terms, reference had been made to the important role played by the Holy See in promoting political dialogue in many regions of the world.

55. The recent trips made by the Pope had been highlighted and it was understood that more detailed information would be provided in the next periodic report on that subject. All in all, the Holy See acted as a moral and religious force, and Committee members had emphasized the need for it to play an ever-increasing role in achieving and keeping peace in different regions.

56. Some questions had been raised during the debate about the Holy See's failure to make the declaration under article 14 of the Convention. Other questions of note included the relationship between canonical and domestic law, and the composition of the governing structures within the Vatican in terms of the ethnicity, race and gender of the officials concerned.

57. The CHAIRMAN welcomed the frank and fruitful dialogue with the State party. The Committee had noted the assurances given that information would be furnished on certain issues in the next periodic report. It was appropriate to echo the Committee's previous concluding observations relating to the important role played by the Holy See in promoting the Convention and the aim of eliminating racial discrimination in all regions of the world. The Committee appreciated the Holy See's readiness to foster tolerance and non-discriminatory attitudes by using its considerable influence.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.